

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 043807

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TO AMEMBASSY ROME

S E C R E T STATE 043807

EXDIS FOR AMBASSADOR LODGE'S OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US, VT

SUBJECT: BRIEFING FOR VATICAN ON EAST-WEST DETENTE

REF: ROME 124

1. SARROS MAY DRAW ON FOLLOWING ISSUES/TALKING POINTS  
PAPER IN RESPONSE TO CASAROLI'S REQUEST FOR AN ASSESSMENT  
OF CURRENT STATUS OF AND PROSPECTS FOR DETENTE:

### 2. BACKGROUND

THE MOMENTUM OF US IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET  
UNION HAS BEEN SLOWING FOR SLIGHTLY OVER A YEAR--SPECIFI-  
CALLY, SINCE THE HASSLE OVER THE TRADE AND JEWISH EMIGRATION  
ISSUE CAME TO A HEAD IN DECEMBER 1974 AND PREVENTED IMPLE-  
MENTATION OF OUR TRADE PACKAGE WITH THE USSR. WHILE THIS  
DEVELOPMENT SIGNALLED THE BEGINNING OF THE SLOWDOWN, THERE  
ARE OTHER FACTORS OF EQUAL OR GREATER IMPORTANCE. THERE  
HAS BEEN INCREASING QUESTIONING IN BOTH COUNTRIES ABOUT

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 043807

THE EXTENT OF THE BENEFITS DERIVED FROM THE RELATIONSHIP.

THE COMPLEXITIES OF STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION HAVE PROLONGED EFFORTS TO GET A SALT AGREEMENT BASED UPON THE VLADIVOSTOK ACCORD. AND, FINALLY BUT BY NO MEANS LEAST IN IMPORTANCE, THE MASSIVE SOVIET/CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA HAS RAISED

THE PROSPECT OF A MORE AGGRESSIVE PROBING ON MOSCOW'S PART IN THIRD WORLD AREAS.

BOTH SIDES NEVERTHELESS RETAIN THEIR BASIC INTEREST IN IMPROVED RELATIONS, AND PROSPECTS ARE THAT THE BASIC INGREDIENTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP WILL BE PRESERVED INTACT DESPITE CURRENT DIFFICULTIES, UNLESS THERE IS REPETITION OF SOVIET EXPANSIONIST TRENDS EVIDENT IN ANGOLA. IN THAT CASE THE DETENTE PROCESS COULD SUFFER IMPORTANT REVERSALS.

### 3. TALKING POINTS

--THE MOMENTUM OF OUR IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION HAS SLOWED OVER THE PAST YEAR FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS:

-THERE HAS BEEN INCREASING CRITICISM OF THE RELATIONSHIP AND DOUBTS ABOUT THE BENEFITS DERIVED FROM IT IN BOTH COUNTRIES;

-INITIAL ACHIEVEMENTS WERE IMPRESSIVE BUT DRAMATIC BREAKTHROUGHS ARE NOW DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE AS THE RELATIONSHIP ACQUIRES A MORE ROUTINE CHARACTER AND IS INCREASINGLY CENTERED ON ISSUES OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE TO EACH SIDE;

-THE COMPLEXITIES OF REGULATING THE STRATEGIC BALANCE HAVE PROLONGED THE EFFORT TO ACHIEVE A NEW SALT AGREEMENT;

-AND, CURRENTLY THE MOST WORRISOME ISSUE, THE MASSIVE SOVIET/CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA GENERATES CONCERN ABOUT MOSCOW'S FUTURE BEHAVIOR IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.

--THE SOVIET UNION HAS EMERGED AS THE SECOND SUPERPOWER, NOT ONLY IN STRATEGIC NUCLEAR ARMS BUT ALSO IN CONVENTION-SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 043807

AL CAPABILITIES TO PROJECT SOVIET INFLUENCE ON A GLOBAL SCALE. THE IMPROVED ATMOSPHERE IN EAST-WEST RELATIONS WILL BE THREATENED IF MOSCOW USES THAT POWER IRRESPONSIBLY, AS IT HAS IN ANGOLA, TO SEEK UNILATERAL ADVANTAGES. WE ARE TRYING BY WORD AND DEED TO IMPRESS THIS UPON THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP.

--DESPITE CURRENT DIFFICULTIES, WE ARE ENDEAVORING TO

PRESERVE THE BASIC INGREDIENTS OF OUR IMPROVED RELATIONS  
WITH THE USSR.

--THE QUESTION OF THE STRATEGIC BALANCE IS CENTRAL TO OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. PROGRESS WAS MADE ON SALT ISSUES DURING SECRETARY KISSINGER'S JANUARY VISIT TO MOSCOW, AND WE REMAIN HOPEFUL OF ACHIEVING A SALT AGREEMENT THIS YEAR, POSSIBLY IN TIME FOR A BREZHNEV VISIT TO THE US BEFORE OUR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGNS GET INTO FULL SWING. THE ISSUE IS TOO CRUCIAL, HOWEVER, FOR THE ELECTIONS OR ANY OTHER ARTIFICIAL DEADLINE TO EFFECT THE PACE OF THE TALKS.

--OUR ECONOMIC RELATIONS ARE IN GOOD REPAIR, DESPITE FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT OUR TRADE AGREEMENT BECAUSE OF THE JEWISH EMIGRATION PROBLEM. OUR EXPORTS LAST YEAR WERE VALUED AT SLIGHTLY OVER 1.8 BILLION, THE HIGHEST LEVEL YET. MORE THAN HALF OF THIS WAS DUE TO SOVIET PURCHASES OF US GRAIN. OUR TRADE SURPLUS WITH THE USSR ACCOUNTED FOR ABOUT 14 PERCENT OF OUR TOTAL 1975 SURPLUS. THE COMING YEAR SHOULD BE AT LEAST AS GOOD.

--WE REMAIN ENGAGED WITH THE SOVIETS ON SUCH MULTILATERAL ISSUES AS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CSCE FINAL ACT, ESPECIALLY ITS HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES AND SECURITY PROVISIONS, AND EFFORTS TO REACH AGREEMENT ON FORCE REDUCTIONS IN CENTRAL EUROPE (MBFR).

--THERE HAS BEEN SLIGHT PROGRESS ON CSCE IMPLEMENTATION. THE SOVIETS ARE CAUGHT IN THE DILEMMA OF WANTING TO BE A FULL ADHERENT TO THE CSCE ACT, YET ARE CONFRONTED WITH DOMESTIC PROBLEMS ITS IMPLEMENTATION RAISES FOR THEM.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 043807

--THE SOVIET RESPONSE TO OUR DECEMBER MBFR PROPOSALS WAS DISCOURAGING. THE PROPOSAL APPEARS AIMED AT CODIFYING THE WARSAW PACT ADVANTAGE IN GROUND FORCES. AS A RESULT, THE WEST'S EFFORT TO ACCOMMODATE MOSCOW ON REDUCING NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND AIRCRAFT (OPTION III) DID NOT ELICIT AN ACCEPTABLE RESPONSE. THE SOVIETS MAY BE JUST SETTING UP A TOUGH INITIAL BARGAINING POSITION, BUT PROGRESS IN THE TALKS IS GOING TO BE SLOW.

IN SUM, 1976 WILL BE A TOUCH-AND-GO YEAR IN EAST-WEST RELATIONS, BUT WE ARE HOPEFUL OF MAINTAINING THE TREND TOWARD IMPROVEMENT OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS DESPITE THE UNCERTAINTIES AND DIFFICULTIES THAT OBVIOUSLY LIE AHEAD.  
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